

Zaramo language

Zaramo is a Niger-Congo language, formerly primary language of the Zaramo people of eastern Tanzania. Zaramo is also known as Zalamo, Kizaramo, Dzalamo, Zaramu, Saramo and, Myagatwa. The language is critically endangered. The ethnic population of the Zaramo people reaches about 200,000, yet there are only a few elderly speakers remaining.^[4]

These speakers are mostly located in the villages surrounding the city of Dar es Salaam. Zaramo is thought to be passed down matrilineally to the children in these villages, while it remains critically endangered in the city.^[5]

There are very few translations of the language in existence except for a few native speakers' documented translations, and the publication of the New Testament from 1975.

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Classification

Zaramo is genetically tied to the Niger-Congo language family. It is classified under the Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, Benue-Congo, Bantoid, Southern, Narrow Bantu, Central, G, and Zigula-Zaramo families. (G.33)^[6]

History

Zaramo is the official language of a Bantu tribe located in the coastal area surrounding the former capital city of Tanzania, Dar es Salaam. Linguistic evidence supports the theory that Zaramo originated from the Luguru tribe. A migration of the Zaramo people eastward from their original location in Tanzania has been the source of slight changes in their cultural language.

Zaramo	
Native to	Tanzania
Region	Pwani Region
Ethnicity	657,000 (2000) ^[1]
Native speakers	("few" cited 1991) ^[1]
Language family	Niger–Congo <ul style="list-style-type: none">Atlantic–Congo<ul style="list-style-type: none">Benue–Congo<ul style="list-style-type: none">Bantoid<ul style="list-style-type: none">Bantu<ul style="list-style-type: none">Northeast Bantu<ul style="list-style-type: none">Northeast Coast Bantu<ul style="list-style-type: none">Ruvu<ul style="list-style-type: none">Zaramo
Writing system	Latin
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	zaj
Glottolog	zara1247 (http://glottolog.org/resource/language/id/zara1247) ^[2]
Guthrie code	G.33 ^[3]

The Zaramo as they are known today are made up of clans that migrated from the Kutu and the Luguru around 1700. Their common ancestry with the Luguru is substantiated, in that they have the same common language with only slight dialectal variations. The language of the Zaramo is mutually intelligible with those of the Jutu, the Luguru, the Kwere, and the Kami. Most Zaramo people of today chose to speak the lingua franca of Tanzania.^[7]

While the ethnic population of the Zaramo people reaches about 200,000, today there are only a few elderly speakers of Zaramo language. Most Zaramo people speak Swahili as their first language today and have adopted Swahili-Arabic names. They favor the Swahili over their endangered dialect for its broad use in communication and trade.

Geographic Distribution

Official Status

Zaramo is not the official language of any country or region. Currently, the only locations where Zaramo still exists is Pwani region of eastern Tanzania. This area is located between two cities - Bagamoyo and Dar es Salaam. The rural, costal area is home to the Zaramo people who are the only ethnic group to speak the language.

Dialects Varieties

There are no known dialects of Zaramo. It shares a lexical similarity: 68% with Kutu [kdc], 65% with Kami [kcu], 61% with Kwere [cwe] and Doe [doe].^[6] This connection is substantiated by the historical relationship between the tribes.

Examples

There are very few examples of Zaramo language available. A list of words and phrases was provided by a native speaker to the author of Short Specimens of the Vocabularies of Three Unpublished African Languages: Gindo, Zaramo, and Angazidja.^[8]

English word or phrase	Zaramo translation
Basket	Mgelo
Chair	Kigoda
Friend	Mbwiga
House	Ng'anda
Town	Kayi
I do not know	Sitangile
What is your name?	Tagwa lako nani?

Writing System

The Zaramo language uses latin script for its writing system.^[9] Latin script is the most widely used writing system in the world. Some languages adapted the alphabet by the addition of entirely new letters such Zaramo, and other languages from the Niger-Congro orthographies.

See also

1. Zaramo people
2. Languages of Tanzania
3. Zaramo Ethnologue

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